

¡viva venezuela!

● Vol 6 ● Issue 1 ● Autumn 2016



Social Progress Vs. Right-Wing Reaction

Also inside:



- No to the Coup in Brazil
- US Intervention in Venezuela

With thanks to



www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk
e: info@venezuelasolidarity.co.uk

**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**



Latin America – Social Progress Vs. Right-Wing Reaction

Recent years have seen powerful, well organised and well financed right-wing forces - assisted by the USA externally, and much of the mainstream media and traditional economic elites domestically - have some successes in destabilising several progressive governments across Latin America. By capitalising on the terrible domestic impact of the world economic crisis they have been able to channel the inevitable local dissatisfaction and turn it against incumbent progressive governments. But this right-wing resurgence is being challenged by the continent's grassroots and progressive movements.



Argentinian demonstration

Venezuela is at the centre of this process where social progress is encountering reaction. Right wing forces have waged an economic campaign reminiscent of the destabilisation of Allende's government in Chile in the 1970s. As oil prices tumble, this 'economic war' has attacked the poorest in society through artificially created shortages, price speculation, and black marketeering in basic necessities, while blaming the government for the resulting hardship.

In Argentina, Cristina Fernandez's government was subjected to years of destabilisation and media misrepresentation. The consequence has been the election of neoliberal Mauricio Macri who, despite a slender 1% majority, has rolled back some of the previous decade and a half's social gains.

Currently in Brazil, the right-wing, supported by the wealthy elite, have engineered the impeachment of democratically elected President Dilma Rousseff on the flimsy grounds of budget manipulation. Ironically, many members of Michel Temer's new right wing interim government are themselves under investigation on serious corruption charges.

In both Brazil and Argentina, right wing governments' neoliberal counter reforms have closed down, abolished or drastically reduced social programmes. These measures have already affected millions of people. In Argentina, for example, Macri's policies have thrown 1.4 million people back into poverty.

To implement these policies in the face of mass resistance from trade unions, social movements and others, Brazil and Argentina's right wing governments have also created highly repressive and undemocratic political environments.

A feature of the current reactionary offensive is the illegitimate threat to invoke the Organisation of American States 'Democratic Charter' to justify action and external intervention against Venezuela, using the false claim of a "rupture in democracy". Accompanying this is a determination to reverse many of the recent gains of regional integration. While focussed on Venezuela, these attacks appear to have a continental perspective.

However, the right wing offensive has also produced a mass response across the region, from Venezuelans organising in their communities and workplaces to defend the social gains of recent years to Brazilians protesting against the right-wing government during the recent Olympics.

Despite the various setbacks, it is clear that both the decade and a half of progressive policies and the accompanying building of progressive movements cannot be easily overturned.

Our duty is to intensify our solidarity. No pasaran!

This magazine is published by the
Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Contributors to this issue were:

- Francisco Dominguez
- Sue Grey
- Patrick Foley and
- Tim Young



VSC would like to thank Telesur English and Venezuelanalysis.com for their reporting of Venezuela, which is referred to throughout this publication.

**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**



**Unite the Union GPM London Print Branch
Celebrate Venezuela - Unity is Strength**

Mick Cotter, Branch Chair
Tommy Murphy, Branch Secretary



Wikileaks exposes US Support for Venezuela's right-wing opposition



DEMOCRATS.ORG



WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP FORUM

US Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz co-sponsored sanctions against the elected Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro in order to gain support from supporters of Venezuela's right-wing in her home state of Florida, according to leaked emails.

The bill to authorise sanctions was introduced by Marco Rubio, Bob Menendez and others on the US hard right on grounds of human rights violations. But Wasserman's motivation to be included was revealed in the email from her press secretary, Geoff Burgon. "We won't be doing any full statement on it - just quietly letting friends in the community know. Key priority for us at home with a big Venezuelan constituency in Weston," he wrote.



Unite the Union Supports Venezuela

Unite the Union's annual conference condemned the Venezuelan Right-wing's attempts to destabilise and ultimately overthrow the country's progressive government, and condemned the return of austerity and privatisation in other countries in Latin America.

Young member Ben Hayes condemned the US Executive Order, which declares Venezuela a threat to US security, and the accompanying US unilateral sanctions against Venezuela.

Highlighting the resulting international backlash, he said: "Leaders from throughout the region condemned the decree and massive mobilisations took place in Venezuela against the U.S intervention."

In his speech, he praised Venezuela's achievements in reducing poverty and eliminating illiteracy, and improving healthcare and workers' rights through the Labour Law – "one of the most progressive labour laws in the world ... enshrining the right to organise and the right to strike, including secondary action."

Creative use of urban spaces to grow food



Some 135,000 Venezuelans have taken up President Maduro's suggestion of growing fruit and vegetables in urban spaces across the country.

Rooftops, balconies, schools, military bases and even jails have proved to be fertile territory, producing 273 tonnes of vegetables, fruits and herbs.

The initiative is part of his government's "Great Agro-Venezuela Mission" to improve food security in the country.

Maduro takes action to ease shortages of personal hygiene products

Venezuela's newly nationalized Kimberly-Clark factory has produced 2,068,800 sanitary towels in the first month since reopening.

Previously, the Texas-based consumer products giant fired nearly 1,000 workers and shut down its operations in the country without warning, claiming shortages of raw materials, despite well-stocked warehouses. The company has a record of politically opposing Venezuela's left-wing government.

In response, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro approved a request from workers at the plant to resume its operations, pledging USD \$22 million to restart production. Faced with such economic sabotage Maduro told



workers: "enterprise closed, [equals] enterprise to be taken over." All products of the company will be distributed to communities via local committees to ensure need is met.


NUT Islington Association

NO TO COUPS!



No to US Intervention in Venezuela

The 21st century in Latin America looks set to be a new era for regime change in Latin America, fuelled by media manipulation, economic sabotage and right-wing parliamentary plots. Welcome to the age of the 'soft' coup.

Recent years have seen the removal of Honduran president Manuel Zelaya in 2009 and the impeachment of Paraguay's former president Fernando Lugo in 2012 under disturbing circumstances. Today, Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff has faced impeachment by a congress of 513 members, 303 of whom are themselves being investigated for serious crimes or corruption charges.

Unsurprisingly in a period of right-wing resurgence across Latin America, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is facing similar

problems. The dramatic drop in world oil prices coupled with increasing economic sabotage by the Venezuelan elite has seen food, medicine and power shortages across the country. Violent right-wing opposition demonstrations and political assassinations of socialist politicians are seeking to create a climate of fear.

Currently, President Maduro is advocating a dialogue with the opposition as the best way to tackle the nation's problems. However, he also faces external destabilisation – both former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe and the



Organization of American States (OAS) General Secretary, Luis Almagro, have directly called for foreign intervention.

But the more direct and influential hand of the US in destabilising Venezuela over many years was recently exposed when *WikiLeaks* released thousands of emails from Hillary Clinton's time as Secretary of State and from the Democratic National Committee. The leaks showed that Clinton sought to "rein in Chávez" and to follow the US embassy strategy of using "creative US outreach to Chávez's regional partners" to "drive a wedge between him and them." Congresswoman Debbie Schultz was another US interventionist exposed by the cables.

By sponsoring sanctions against Venezuela as a means of gaining support from the opposition in her state, Schultz inadvertently highlighted the 'America's Backyard' mentality of many US politicians and their disregard for the South American nations.

Using organisations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the US state department has directed money to anti-government groups within Venezuela to help "rein in Chávez".

In 2010 it authorised more than \$15 million, on the pretence of protecting democracy. In 2013/14, NED & USAID reportedly filtered \$14 million to opposition groups – including the political campaigns of Leopoldo Lopez and Maria Corina Machado, two of the leaders linked to inciting violent protests in February 2014.

President Obama himself authorised a special fund of \$5 million in the 2011 annual budget for similar purposes, which was increased to \$5.5 million in 2015.

Some estimate that between 2002 and 2012 the US channelled US \$120 million to the right-



**Scottish
Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

**Greetings
from the
Scottish
Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

SVSC actively supports the achievements of the democratically elected progressive government of Venezuela. We denounce the attempts from extreme, right-wing, anti-democratic elements to destabilise Venezuela's elected government.

Progressive governments and popular social movements in Latin America offer examples of progress and popular participation.

The Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign welcomes affiliations and participation in our campaign:
www.scottishevenezuelasolidarity.org.uk

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE – SOLIDARITY FOREVER

wing opposition in Venezuela through various routes.

But monetary backing is by no means the sole method of intervention – US sanctions and international media manipulation can be just as effective as dollars.

Obama's Executive Order, renewed in March 2016, declared Venezuela "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

Despite Obama's subsequent admission that Venezuela poses no threat to the US at all (after an outcry from all 33 members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), the sanctions remain in force.

Regardless of who wins the presidency in November, we can expect US foreign policy to take an even more aggressive stance towards Venezuela.

The persistence of past interventions, such as those examined above, shows that domestic and external reactionary forces will continue their efforts to overthrow the constitutional and legitimate government of President Nicolas Maduro.



**For train drivers, trade unions
& the Labour Party since 1880**

NO MORE GENERAL PINOCHETS

In 1973 ASLEF stood shoulder to shoulder with the people of Chile after the military coup against – and murder of – Salvador Allende, the world's first democratically elected Marxist president. We remember what the armed forces, and their paramilitary chums, did in Latin America – we remember the disappeared – and we remember the economic war, waged on these countries by Milton Friedman and his acolytes in the Chicago School, which came in its wake. That's why we celebrate the achievements of – and send solidarity greetings to – the people of Venezuela.

**Mick Whelan, general secretary, Tosh McDonald, president
ASLEF THE TRAIN DRIVERS' UNION**

**Unite
stands in
Solidarity
with the**

**Venezuelan
people**



Len McCluskey,
General Secretary

Tony Woodhouse,
Chair – Executive Council

 www.unitetheunion.org

 [@unitetheunion](https://twitter.com/unitetheunion)

 [Unitetheunion1](https://www.facebook.com/Unitetheunion1)

No Coup in Brazil

By **Tony Burke**, Unite the Union Assistant General Secretary

Attention turned to Brazil for the Olympic Games this summer. The Labour movement and progressive activists in the country and internationally took the chance to shine a light on the dismantling of democracy and social progress there in recent months.

A coup has taken place in Brazil, to remove the elected President Dilma Rousseff. Rousseff, elected by 54 million Brazilians, was impeached - by just 61 senators on dubious charges of fiscal manipulations.

This was a clearly political manoeuvre from Brazil's right-wing that would remove the Brazilian Workers' Party from office for the first time since former President Lula was elected in 2002.

The shady circumstances surrounding the impeachment, and the regressive measures taken by interim President Michel Temer since he usurped power, have been widely condemned in Brazil itself and across Latin America. There is also a mountain of evidence

of corruption by the coup-plotters themselves.

Since coming to office, the right-wing Government led by Temer has shown complete disregard for democracy and social progress.

It is initiating large-scale privatisations and effectively rolling back many of the progressive reforms of workers', women's and indigenous rights carried out by the Workers' Party under President Rousseff and her predecessor President Lula.

As Temer himself is barred from running in the



" North West Unison declares our solidarity with President Maduro and the Venezuelan People. Venezuela is a priority in our international work and we are proud to maintain our links with the Party of Progress and Revolution "



On behalf of its members and supporters, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG) expresses solidarity with comrades on the Latin American left who are under constant threat from the policies of the United States and other right wing forces.

It is 37 years since the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) overthrew the brutal right wing, US- backed, Somoza dictatorship. Nicaragua remains steadfast in resisting outside interference, and calls on the US to respect the rights and sovereignty of all people in Latin America. Hasta la victoria siempre!

www.nscag.org



an undemocratic, conservative cabal in charge of by far the largest and most powerful country in the region. Now is the time for international solidarity!

2018 election due to previous electoral violations, he is dismantling democracy and imposing austerity and privatisation without fear of electoral repercussions.

From the outset, Temer's coup government has been visibly reactionary. He set the tone for his interim presidency by initially appointing an all-white, all-male cabinet that seriously under-represents women, LGBT people and the indigenous peoples of Brazil, one of the most diverse countries in the world.

As Temer's illegitimate term started and his reactionary policies and cutbacks were implemented, the Brazilian trade union movement was quick to back Rousseff and the Workers' Party because of their record in tackling exploitation and promoting workers' rights.

Both the main Trade Union Confederation of Brazil and the British TUC have come together in condemning Temer's reign as illegitimate.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "The British trade union movement has pledged to our sisters and brothers in Brazil that we will not stay silent as their rights are attacked, their

democracy dismantled, their social advances rolled back."

In this time of crisis, with a dangerous austerity agenda on the cards, the people of Brazil (making up half the population of Latin America) are facing a serious reversal in their living standards as a result of the cuts.

This also has a massive significance regionally. The enormous gains in social progress and democracy in Latin America of recent years are now under direct threat from



Impeached President Dilma celebrates her inauguration with former President Lula



NUT

The National Union of Teachers, the biggest teachers' union in Europe, sends solidarity greetings to colleagues and friends fighting for democracy where it is under attack. We stand with progressive forces in Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina.

Kevin Courtney
General Secretary

Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign 

AGM

After Chavez, the Empire Strikes Back
Saturday October 15

- 10am ● Unite House, 128 Theobalds Road, London, WC1X
- With special guest Jacobo Torres, International Officer, CSBT (Venezuelan TUC equivalent.)

Register online and details at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk



viva venezuela!

Latin America 2016 Conference



Register and info at: www.latinamerica2016.org.uk

Join the VSC

- If you join VSC online at: www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk for only £18 you receive a free DVD of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. You can also join by cheque for £18 (£9 unwaged) to *Venezuela Solidarity Campaign*, c/o Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.

Saturday 26th November TUC Congress House, London

- With: ● H.E. Rocio Maniero, Venezuelan Ambassador
● Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, President, US National Lawyers Guild ● Chris Williamson, Former Labour MP
● Christine Blower, NUT ● Victoria Brittain
● Andy De La Tour, Actor & writer

North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

**send a message of solidarity
in support of our colleagues
in Venezuela**



Unite the Union North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

Dick Banks
Regional Chair

Karen Reay
Regional Secretary



**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

